

# The OMEN

No Shirt  
No Shoes  
No Cover

Open the Goddamn Magazine

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## omen

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## to submit

Submissions are due Saturdays before 5 p.m. You can submit by diskette (Mac or IBM) in rich text or plain text format, and typed hard copies will also be accepted, reluctantly. Label your disks well and they will get back to you. Get your stuff to Jeffrey Paternostro, Prescott 96A, x5141. You may also use e-mail. Send e-mail submissions to [jip00@hampshire.edu](mailto:jip00@hampshire.edu)

And be sure to read our policy box at the bottom of the next page before submitting.

Visit the Omen's very simple website at [omen.hampshire.edu](http://omen.hampshire.edu)

Now you are officially a college student- you bailed a dumbass friend out of jail.

Quote Attributed to Jeffrey Paternostro, in words to his brother

## I'M A SLACKER TOO, DAMMIT

A Guest Editorial

(actual editor's note: I really didn't feel like writing an editorial this week, so here's Rebecca's screed on being a slacker, whatever, gradee. On the plus side you don't have to squint to hard to pretend that I actually wrote it. -jp)

I came across the Livejournal of a prospective student recently (oh Livejournal, you provide so much) and saw her list of college acceptances. She had put Hampshire in bold and noted something along the lines of, "look, a good school accepted me!" This threw me for a loop. I rarely think of Hampshire as a "good" school, in the U.S. News sense of someplace selective with name recognition and a great reputation.

Yes, I know that we've been putting together this "image". The image is basically this: Hampshire is a place for hard-working, self-motivated, bright people who want to achieve. But the problem, is, it's working. People are thinking of us this way.

As a slacker, I demand our image back.

Perhaps you don't think of me as a slacker. You just never saw me in high school. I actually wrote my Hampshire essay about how my glasses affected how people saw me, and theorized that because I wore glasses and read a lot, people couldn't believe that I'd be a bad student. My teachers certainly believed it; I don't know how many times I was told that I wasn't "realizing my potential". I can't think of a time when I actually turned in an assignment on time. We had a system of "yellow flags" (actually just

yellow pieces of paper) that teachers sent home when students were getting behind in their work. I never got a red flag (that meant failing), but I had a nice collection of yellows and a lot of incompletes.

I heard vague rumors that colleges liked to see particular things, like extracurricular things, and a good academic record. I had no clue, didn't care, and had no aspirations to any kind of "good" college. To this day I remain surprised at the number of schools that were willing to take me. I attribute it to good SATs and the fact that I went to a hippie high school where we also had no grades, and I was able to select the best (or really, the least bad) of my evaluations (see, a Hampshire-style transcript does have its benefits!)

But I should also owe some gratitude to the fact that the level of competitiveness was not, just five years ago, what it is now. More people are applying to college and they're applying to more colleges. Hampshire has ridden this tide, combined it with some savvy marketing as I mentioned above, and brought our admissions rate down to around 50%.

Yet there was a time when we took 85% of our applicants; at this point, the job of an admissions counselor was basically to winnow out the truly awful and admit the rest. I believe this is what they refer to as "the lean years". Yet I regard it with a great measure of nostalgia, even if I wasn't here for most of it. In those days, people self-selected to be here: if you weren't really awful and you wanted it (and could afford it), you could come.

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## policy

The *Omen* is Hampshire's longest-running bi-weekly publication, established by Stephanie Cole in December of 1992. In the past, submissions have included students' perspectives on the campus, administration, news, movie reviews, commentary, short fiction, satire, first born, artwork, comics, and the occasional embarrassing self-promotion. Everything the *Omen* receives, provided it is sent from a member of the Hampshire community, will be published unless it is deemed libelous or defamatory. Although we find such things amusing and entertaining for countless hours, it is just not an option in this forum. Libel will be considered clearly false or unsupportable writing that maliciously damages a person's reputation.

The *Omen* will not edit anything you write

(except spelling and grammar). You must sign your real name (no anonymous submissions) and understand that you are responsible for what you say. Nonetheless, views in the *Omen* do not necessarily represent the views of anyone, anywhere, living or dead.

There is no *Omen* staff, save those positions of editor-in-chief and layout editor. To qualify for community service you must be a consistent contributor and help regularly with layout. Layout times (and such) will be discussed at our meetings. Meetings are held every Tuesday after release of an issue in the Kiva at 9PM. Everyone, everywhere, living or dead, should come.

The *Omen* loves you.



THE OFFICIAL OMEN HAIR:

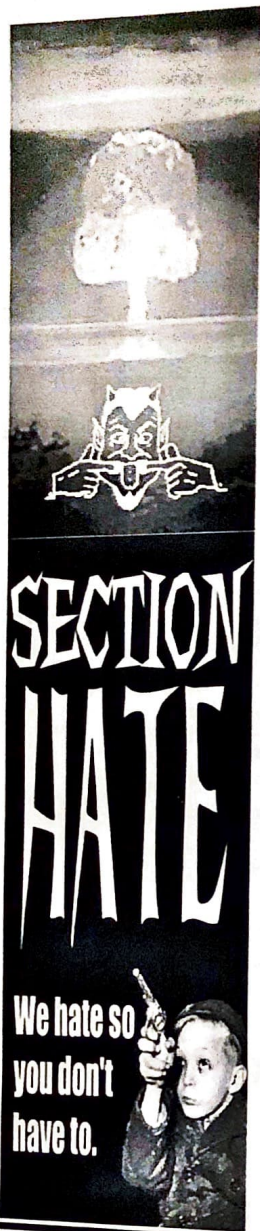
Views in the Omen (5)

Do not necessarily (7)

Reflect the staff's views (5)







## A LITTLE ENGLISH LESSON AND A LITTLE MORAL LESSON

**O**ppression: unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power. (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary)

It seems that Hampsters love claiming they're oppressed. The majority of them are the most privileged fucking kids in the world, but god forbid they not get their chance to show how downtrodden they are.

I've heard kids say that a statement oppressed them. Hello – that's not oppression, that's freedom of speech. Posters? Those aren't oppression either, not even if they're sexist and bigoted. They're a form of freedom of expression. An *Omen* article that fully describes a rape fantasy isn't oppression either; it's freedom of the press. Just because you don't like something that doesn't make it oppression. It might be disgusting or gross or even just plain wrong, but it isn't oppression.

Isamar is a six-month-old Nicaraguan baby. Her mother is sixteen. There's a 30% chance she'll die before she reaches the age of five. Nicaragua has constitutionally guaranteed health care, so her chances ought to be a lot better, but they're not, because Nicaragua has no money to fund that health care. That's because in 1979 when the Sandinistas overthrew an oppressive dictator and put in place a constitutional democracy the United States was angry to lose its little Central American playground, and so waged a guerrilla war in Nicaragua for ELEVEN years. Then, in 1998 (when US

officials had managed to buy the previous election for one of their pals) a hurricane hit the country, regressing their level of progress by DECADES. You know what happened next? That American supported president took all the American-sent aid and put it in his big, fat American bank account. Isamar will never see even the *effects* of one penny of that money.

Isamar is oppressed. Her sixteen-year-old mother and her family are oppressed. All of their fellow campesinos are oppressed, as are people in similar situations around the world.

YOU are not oppressed. You, with your \$150 thousand education, your tastefully used car, your fashionably junky clothes, your comprehensive health insurance, your future in the suburbs (or a structured commune), and your future child, named Devon, or Rain, or Khara, who will never, ever have to know what it's like to have a 30% chance of dying before the age of five.

You are not the oppressed. You are the oppressor. Don't ever forget that. And, next time someone offends you, feel free to tell them to fuck off, but don't make the mistake of calling it oppression.

Oh, and by the way, all y'all who have claimed to be oppressed just because you don't like something – y'all have offended *me*. So I'm taking my own advice.

Fuck Off.



by Jessica Woodard

## "I'M A CONSUMER WHORE!" (And How!)

**S**ick of your friends adopting a falsetto voice and saying "My spoon is too big!" every time SAGA has soup? Do you throw a fit every time somebody, upon hearing the first movement of Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup>, says "Oh, this is the 'Rejected' theme!"? Well, fuck off. I like Don Hertzfeldt.

Hertzfeldt, animator extraordinaire, is the kid behind the 19-minute cartoon, "Rejected." The premise? An animator was asked to draw short spots for The Family Learning channel and various generic products, all of which were rejected by the company. The animator spirals into madness, and eventually the "Rejected" world self-destructs.

Being slightly obsessive, I looked up Hertzfeldt after seeing "Ah, I'amour" and "Rejected" at a Spike and Mike festival a few years ago. I found his website, [www.bitterfilms.com](http://www.bitterfilms.com). If you haven't been, shame on you. It's fabulous.

The site's contents include, among other things, Don's journal, a gallery, information on each film, an FAQ (where Don answers the question, "is Rejected real?"), and his comic strip, "Temporary Anesthetics."

Temporary Anesthetics was once on a website called icebox, but the entire project (including the site) failed. Don has started to post some of

the strips online; they're pretty damn funny. My personal favorites are the showbiz strips.

This article is more of a PSA than a review (in other words, I'm very, very lazy), so I'm going to refrain from explaining and critiquing the rest of the site. Allow me, however, to point out a couple sections worth looking for.

The "secret" pages are rather easy to find -- I think Don has grown tired of emails asking for the special link, so now the access point is obvious. These pages are a series of rather random text, pictures, and inanities that fit together nicely. The "secret" home page is a cluster of text links; the text links give little indication of the content that follows. I think it's supposed to be more fun that way. The pages used to be updated frequently, but I think it's slowed down recently. If you read Don's journal, you'll find that he's been working on a film for four years now, and things are escalating at the moment. He even had to put the "gift for a gift" system (look it up) on hiatus. Poor Don.

His journal, by the way, is usually very entertaining. One of the more recent entries features a two-stanza poem composed entirely of smam email subject lines. When the "gift for a gift" system was up and running, Don would post pictures

of some of the cool gifts sent to him by fans. Many of these were hand-made models of the infamous bannana, crafted in various mediums.

Additionally, remember to read the small text and click on the post-it note art at the bottom of the home page. Make sure to explore the site for articles that Don has posted. They're not necessarily about him, and they're usually very interesting. The most recent posting, an article out of *Esquire*, is linked on the sidebar of the news/updates section.

You'll notice that this article is written colloquially. That's probably because I spent too much time today looking at Don's site. His writing style on bitterfilms is rather similar to the stuff above, though without my added dash (or heaping table-spoon) of pretension.

I'll conclude with an apology to those who read this article expecting a fantastically entertaining and informative Don update, but I don't assiduously keep up with Don news, myself. Perhaps I could have made up some crap ("Don's next film to be another animated version of Metropolis"), but I don't think that would have been very funny. I'm just a simple creature; I rediscovered the site last week and decided to share the wealth.





## ON THE MANIFESTO AND HAMPSHIRE'S ACADEMIC & ADMINISTRATIVE CRISIS

**R**ight off the bat, I should say that while I played no role in the planning or writing of the recent "manifesto" published as a supplement to the Omen, I stand in full solidarity with all those who composed and signed it. Over the past couple of months, Hampshire's political discussions have been reduced to quibbles over the smoking ban or cheap jabs at the pathetic spectacle of "Democracy Day." We've heard repeatedly that the smoking ban is just symptomatic of vague "larger administrative problems" at Hampshire, but until now nobody has really stepped up to articulate the breadth and nature of those problems. The manifesto has begun to provide this much-needed context.

Hampshire's administrative crisis is enormous. Seriously. It's not just that Community Council is crippled, Greg Prince has retired under semi-mysterious circumstances, and the first-year plan is screwing up everything Hampshire stands for ... as if those facts weren't enough. There are butt-loads of other problems too, and they all add up to one horrible catastrophe-in-the-making.

For instance, did you know that something like 70% of the College's faculty is over sixty years old? The impending retirement of Hampshire's founding professors means that ten years from now, few people on campus will even remember what our school was like before the recent, detrimental academic changes. The students

have a vested interest in the hiring of new professors who will support independent work and Hampshire's tradition of radical commitment, but who will decide the replacements for our graying faculty? Under current conditions, you can bet your ass it won't be you—and the administrators who muscled the first-year plan into fruition have far too much clout when it comes to who gets hired.

Here's another good one; maybe you've heard it before: you know how they told us that changes to the first-year plan would not lead to similar restructurings of Divisions II and III? Well that was a lie. Div II is now in the first stages of amendment, and it's a safe bet that Div III is next. You probably don't know anybody participating in this process, and that's something you should be very, very concerned about, even if the changes won't influence you directly. After all, Hampshire College is going to be on your resume for the rest of your life, and you want to be proud of it twenty years from now.

When students called Greg out for ignoring the vote that opposed the smoking ban, his response was that student positions on the board that made the smoking decisions went unfilled due to disinterest. Basically, the administrative stance was that students forfeited their chance to voice their opinions by failing to elect a representative. There's some truth to that, of course. Student apathy is a big problem, but

uniformly blaming "apathy" is an even bigger one. The fact is that students are increasingly too bogged down with work to fill government positions, particularly under the new first-year plan and the increasingly demanding / competitive academic environment.

It used to be that first-year students were expected to take three or four classes per semester. The same went for Div II kids. Now first-years are required to take four, and many take even more than that. I know a few people enrolled in five or six courses this spring, and it boggles my itty bitty mind. As a work-study student, editor of *The Reader*, and student member of IA, I can tell you I would not be involved in any of these "extra-curricular" activities if I felt obligated to take four courses, and I'd probably be on academic probation by now if I entered Hampshire a year later than I did. Somewhere along the line, the College's faculty and administration stopped valuing "extra-curricular" work as integral to the Hampshire education, although it was once considered a defining characteristic of the College's philosophy.

It's a Catch 22 situation, really. Until the academic climate changes, most of us are too busy chasing down professors and writing papers to participate in student government. But to change the current first-year plan, to hire professors who value experiential, non-

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## THE 'COMMON PERNICIOUS IGNORANCE': A RESPONSE TO THE MYOPIC THOUGHT OF

ANDREW JACOBS

by A. Niles Fernando

**T**o me, it is simply unacceptable that history repeat itself, over and over again as an objective fact, a pessimistic one at that. I don't particularly like pessimists; they're always making fun of economics and we all know that's a sin, because all economists (closet hippies) want to do is make people happy. Back to history: As a Sri Lankan, this has been the case with the history of our conflict and I can't help but feel embarrassed about it, even though I was in no way responsible for the actions of my ancestors, I do bear the consequences, I think we all do.

It is simply not good enough to have people tell me that history repeats itself as being a self-evident truth, I must know why! We learn from our mistakes all the time, right? So why, oh why, must humanity always subscribe to this seemingly never-ending cycle of idiocy? I must be honest with you, I've spent far too much of my life thinking about this, it has – to some extent – consumed me, but I am better for it, for I have a solution, I'm sure there are other ones, but this is surely one of them.

Unfortunately for me, I've lived through two periods when this cycle of idiocy was running at a particular high, first during (arguably the height of) the Apartheid regime in South Africa and then at the height of the conflict in Sri Lanka. From my experiences I have elicited

a common denominator which impedes all facets of human progress, what I have come to know and loathe as a *Common Pernicious Ignorance*. (CPI)

This is a quality that transcends race, gender, nationality, political orientation and all other forms of identity; it is present everywhere, relentlessly regressing 'progressive' thought and is a bottleneck in the very intellectual evolution of the human species. It undermines all progress that is being made, to complete the analogy it is driving humanity to make the mistakes that some of us have learned from, over and over again. It is a, if not the intellectual ill of time, not just ours, time in its entirety.

Ignorance comes in many forms, as far as I'm concerned, that a majority of Americans do not know where Sri Lanka is, does not bother me in the least. I'm sure the same would be true for me, were I in your shoes. Clearly, this is not ignorance of the pernicious variety, so what is? Well, you needn't look any further than an article in the latest edition of *The Climax*, 'Good Fences Make Bad Neighbors Tolerable,' by none other than the Public Relations Secretary for the Hampshire College Republicans.

Were I to subject myself to the cycle of idiocy, this article would leave me depressed, but in light of CPI, it's all too

familiar, and I'm able to smile in a somewhat conceited and satisfying manner. To refute this article on a factual basis, to 'stoop to that level,' so to speak, would be counter-productive, insofar as I would effectively be subjecting myself to the very problem I speak of. Similarly, it is my contention that the author of this article is himself a victim and therefore a contributor to an over-arching discourse of pernicious ignorance, the very core of this 'fundamentalist evil' he speaks of.

It appears to me an all too common and sad proceeding when one is to determine his or her end first, and this is succeeded by his or her looking for the means to somehow justify this end. This is anything but intellectual; there is no understanding in this. This is but political, futile and horribly immoral, insofar as the author enjoys a privileged position in the propagation of information and this is irresponsible to say the least.

It is another deplorable fact that in the information age we live in, the casual availability of information has become both a great resource, a potential vanquisher of CPI and at the same time a wonderful transmission mechanism for CPI. It is all too easy to Google in your thesis, cut, paste and do a little tweaking so as to make it sound authoritative and genuine to sway people in your

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favor. As far as intellectual sins are concerned, I'm not sure there is a greater one than the propagation of CPI, and this is precisely what this article is, and this is precisely what terrorists do. To elucidate this concept with an example, it is all too simple to switch 'Palestinians,' 'Terrorists,' and 'Islamofascists,' with 'Israelis,' 'Infidels,' and 'Jews,' and – for good measure – substitute in some similar Bible quotes in this article and lo and behold you have an article worthy of the Public Relations Secretary for Hamas. Clearly, these are feathers of a common bird and are both utterly futile and pernicious approaches. In my condemnation of terrorism, there is nothing to edify.

Clearly, these are feathers of a common bird and not feathers of different birds. Don't get me wrong, I'm unequivocal in my condemnation of terrorism, there is nothing to admire in the senseless and cowardly killing of civilians, it is nothing more than a physical manifestation of CPI and no good can come of it. Now let us consider the issue of 'compassionate' and 'tolerant' Israel with her 'fence' and her 'targeted killings.' Ask yourself what these actions are doing for CPI, who is this benefiting more? Israeli citizens or the Public Relations Secretary for Hamas? Is this conducive to the security of Israel or fuel to anti-Semitic CPI which is at the heart of this Israeli-Palestinian issue? Will these actions change anything? Consider that the US has an Atlantic and a Pacific Ocean and not just a mere wall.

Finally, so long as the constituents of CPI twist compassion to their own ends, in a game of *hearts and minds* for either side, you can be rest-assured that there will be no end to this cycle. It follows, upon observation, that the concept of reciprocity has largely gone astray and together with compassion these are undeniably the most important of all objective morals, both from a philosophical standpoint and if you want any practical gains from a political standpoint.

So, the next time you Google away, try and *reflect* – better yet, in the wise words of Michael Bolton, *Go the Distance* – and ask yourself if you're just subjecting yourself to CPI, or put simply, the victim of someone else's ignorance. To finish with a quote from Albert Einstein, who I imagine, like anyone who wants a real solution, would loathe the CPI whether it is Israeli, Palestinian, Republican or Socialist.

*"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."*

A. Nilesch Fernando

Comments? [nileshfernando@hotmail.com](mailto:nileshfernando@hotmail.com)



classroom learning, and to ensure that our new president is dedicated to reviving the spirit of radical education at Hampshire, we *must* reanimate the student governmental bodies. The students need to break this cycle, because the administration sure as hell won't.

This current, catastrophic situation is an opportunity precisely because it's a crisis. If we assert ourselves, demand access to decision-making committees, and then fill those committees with responsible and committed peers, we can ensure that Hampshire remains as committed to innovative learning as it has been in the past. If we *don't* assert ourselves, Hampshire could turn into a co-ed Mount Holyoke, but without the money and semi-prestige (sorry, Mount Holyoke.)

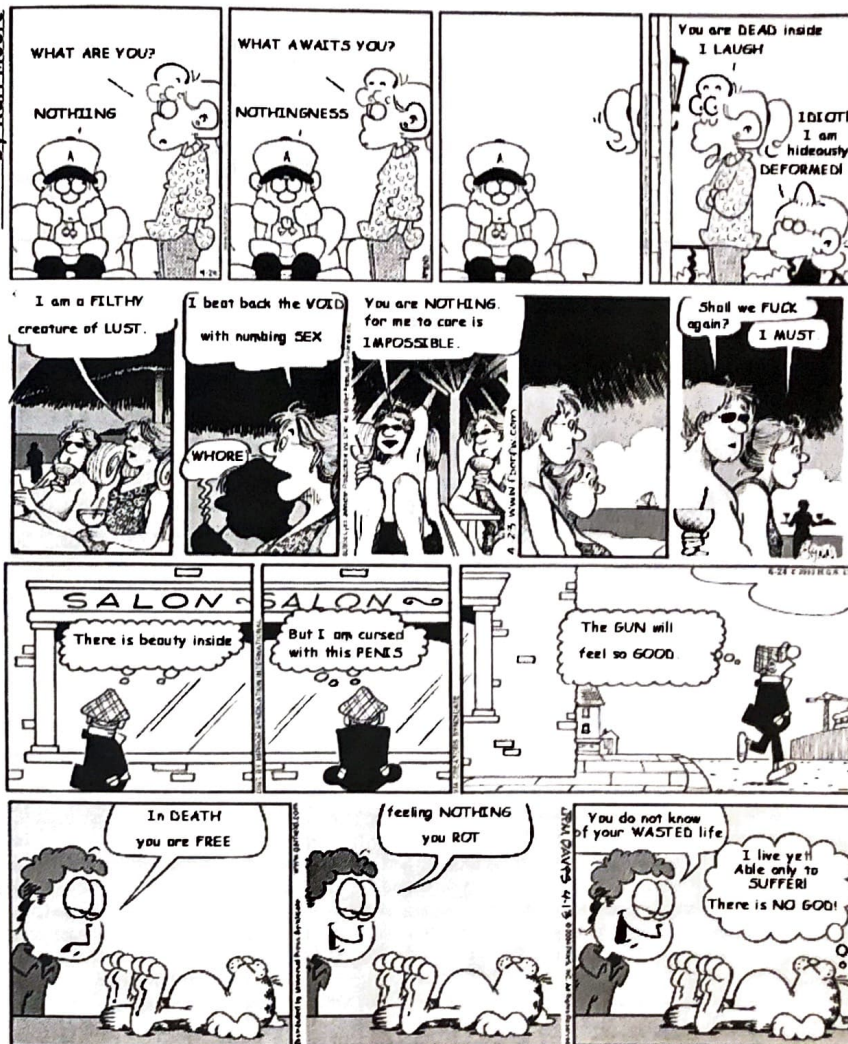
So consider this a call-to-arms, I guess. Or a call-to-ballot-boxes. Whatever. If you're thinking about taking that sixth or fifth or even fourth class next semester, stop thinking about it. Run for a student office instead. Or join one of the schools as a student member, and make your presence known at the meetings. Because you're not going to want to be here in a couple years if you don't get off your ass, despite your job and your bagillion hours of class work, and *do something*.

In the meantime, you should go to [www.vividly.net/radical](http://www.vividly.net/radical) and read the manifesto, if only to trash it. You can sign it at [radicalhampshire@yahoo.com](mailto:radicalhampshire@yahoo.com).



# REVENGE OF NIHILISTIC GERMAN TRANSLATIONS

**by Karl Moore**







continued from page 3

## GUEST EDITORIAL...

Now I interview prospectives who yearn with all their hearts to be here, but don't get admitted. Sure, they might come, get incompletes and drop out in a year. I know all the things wrong with that. But in my opinion, those were the years that got me and a lot of other underachievers under the wire. Some of us proved ourselves; some didn't. But still, there was a haven for us – a place willing (or forced) to take the chance. But the chance was there, if you wanted to take it: a place where you could slack spectacularly, but where, in that pool of misfits and would-be visionaries, you might make it. You might finally realize your potential.

Now, all of a sudden, we are a place for the achievers: that dreadful 55% that actually did something in high school besides reread fantasy novels and go to meetings about founding a teen center. People who, apparently, actually cared whether or not their teachers and parents were disappointed in their academic performance. I have often wondered whether I would get into Hampshire under this new system. In all honesty, the sense I get is that I would probably be waitlisted, which is a shame.

But really I'm not upset about me – hell, I'm here and I'm graduating in four years, unlike a lot of you "achievers" – or even necessarily about all the people who want to be here but can't; such are the times. It all comes back to our image. Since when did we become a "good" school? Since when did people start seeing us as a place for hardworking, earnest, devoted students with good extracurriculars, a selective place where only the best can come? I want Hampshire to once again be a place for the 85%, the slackers and the underachievers and those with "unrealized potential".

I want our fucking image back. Thank you.



by Brian Kendall

"WE WALKED IN A BRAIN"

The first time I walked in a brain was in the year 1999. I was a freshman at Hampshire College, and I was part of a group of students who were participating in a program called "The Brain Project". The program was designed to help students understand the complexities of the human brain and the challenges of living with it. It was a unique opportunity for us to explore the inner workings of our minds and to learn from each other's experiences.

At the time, I was struggling with a lot of things. I was feeling lost and confused, and I was having a hard time finding my place in the world. I was also dealing with a lot of stress and anxiety, and I was feeling like I was being overwhelmed by everything around me. I was looking for a way to make sense of it all, and I was looking for a way to connect with other people who were feeling the same way.

The Brain Project was exactly what I needed. It gave me a chance to share my thoughts and feelings with others, and it gave me a chance to learn from their experiences. It was a place where I could be vulnerable and where I could be honest. It was a place where I could find out that I was not alone, and it was a place where I could find out that I was not crazy.

Over the course of the program, I met a lot of amazing people. I met people who were smart and funny and kind, and I met people who were struggling with the same things that I was. We talked about a lot of things, and we shared a lot of stories. We talked about our dreams and our fears, and we talked about our hopes and our dreams. We talked about the things that were making us feel like we were lost, and we talked about the things that were making us feel like we were found.

By the end of the program, I had learned a lot of things. I had learned that I was not alone, and I had learned that I was not crazy. I had learned that there were other people out there who were feeling the same way that I was, and I had learned that there were other people out there who were trying to make sense of the world the same way that I was. I had learned that I was not the only one who was struggling, and I had learned that I was not the only one who was looking for a way to make sense of it all.

Now, when I think about the first time I walked in a brain, I think about the people I met and the things I learned. I think about the way that I felt like I was being welcomed and the way that I felt like I was being understood. I think about the way that I felt like I was finally finding my place in the world, and I think about the way that I felt like I was finally finding myself.



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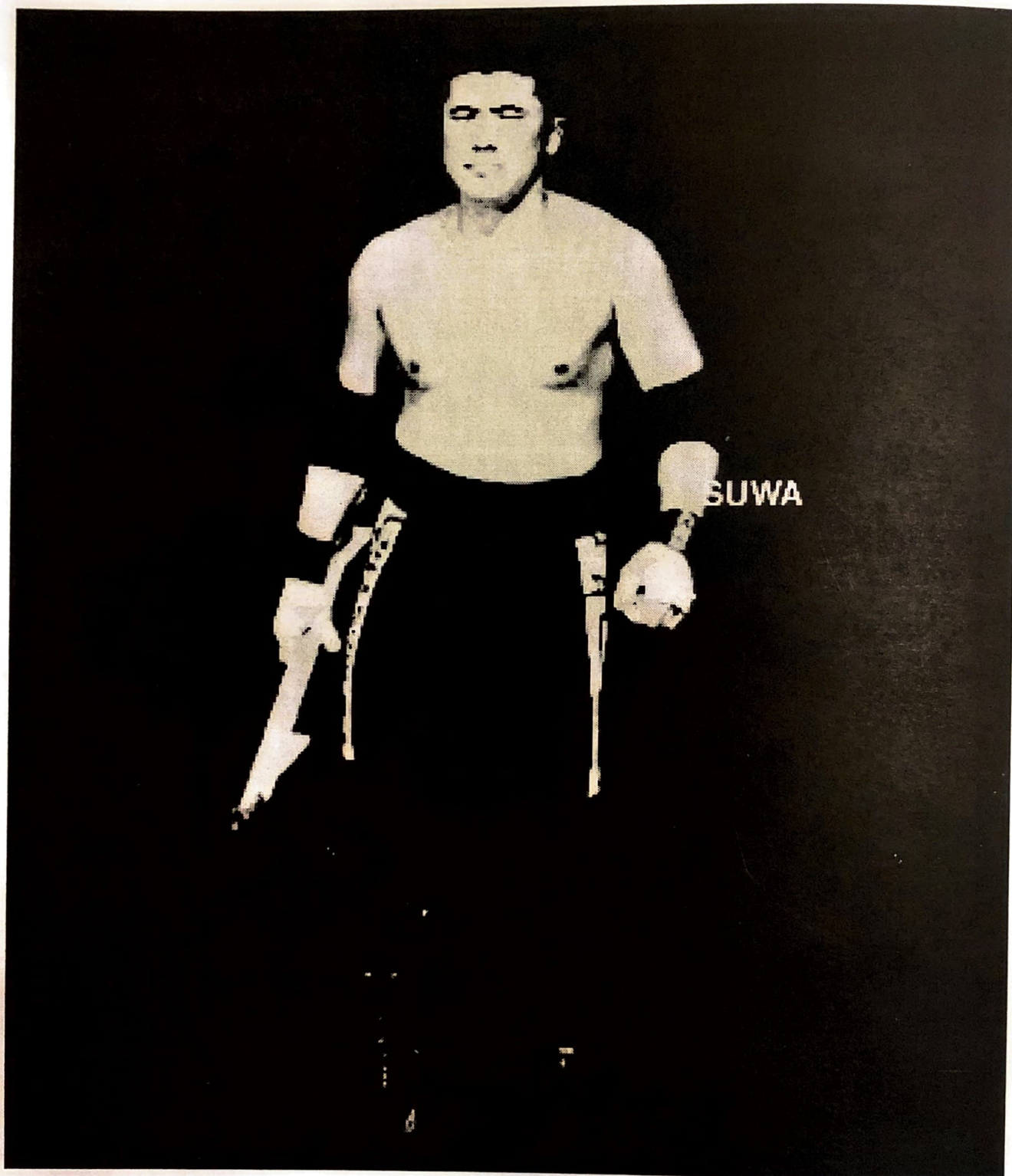












GET WELL SOON, OL' BUDDY

- JP